

CLAIM AMENDMENTS

1-7 (Cancelled)

8. (Previously Presented) A water craft having an aft region and first and second opposite sides and comprising:

a hull,

a cargo deck at least in the aft region of the water craft and above which the hull defines a cargo space,

a main propulsion means located in the aft region of the water craft for propelling the craft in a forward direction, and

at least first and second steering propulsion devices located in the aft region of the water craft to the first and second sides respectively of the main propulsion means, each steering propulsion device being selectively variable with respect to its propulsion direction, whereby steering of the water craft is continuously provided by the steering propulsion devices without a separate rudder means functionally connected to the main propulsion means,

and wherein the output required by the steering propulsion devices is in all less than 50% of the common shaft output of the main propulsion means and of the steering propulsion devices.

9. (Previously Presented) A water craft according to claim 8, wherein the water craft comprises an even number of steering propulsion devices each having a propeller part that is stationarily located outside the hull of the water craft.

10. (Previously Presented) A water craft according to claim 8, wherein the main propulsion means includes a propeller or a water-jet device.

11. (Previously Presented) A water craft according to claim 8, wherein the main propulsion means is located substantially centrally between the opposite sides of the water craft and the water craft comprises two steering propulsion devices located laterally of the main propulsion means to opposite respective sides of the main propulsion means.

12. (Previously Presented) A water craft according to claim 8, comprising a prime mover and a main propulsion shaft connecting the prime mover to the main propulsion means.

13. (Previously Presented) A water craft according to claim 12, wherein the prime mover is a diesel engine, an electric motor or a gas turbine.

14. (Previously Presented) A water craft according to claim 8, wherein the steering propulsion devices are installed below the cargo deck.

15. (Previously Presented) A water craft according to claim 14, wherein a maintenance space is defined below the cargo deck and the steering propulsion devices are accessible in the maintenance space for maintenance purposes.

16. (Previously Presented) A method of operating a water craft having an aft region and first and second opposite sides, and comprising a hull, a cargo deck at least in the aft region of the water craft and above which the hull defines a cargo space, and a main propulsion means located in the aft region of the water craft for propelling the craft in a forward direction, said method comprising continuously using the main propulsion means exclusively to propel the water craft and not to apply steering force to the water craft, and steering the water craft by applying steering propulsion forces to the water craft at first and second locations in the aft region to the first and second sides respectively of the main propulsion means and by selectively varying the directions of the steering propulsion forces applied to the water craft at said first and second locations.

17. (New) A method according to claim 16, comprising applying steering propulsion forces to the water craft using first and second steering propulsion devices located in the aft region of the water craft to the first and second sides respectively of the main propulsion means, and also using the first and second steering propulsion devices to propel the water craft in the forward direction.

18. (New) A water craft according to claim 8, wherein a maintenance space is defined below the cargo deck and the steering propulsion devices are accessible in the maintenance space for maintenance purposes.